

A Day in the life of the Harbormaster

By MARK CABANA

Since 1977, Don Beers has been waking up before sunrise. At least five or six days a week he gets in his car, drives to work, and is greeted by a "working world" most would envy. As he walks to his office, easterly winds push against his face and local fishermen greet him with hellos and weather reports. Beers steps into his office on the pier, turns on the weather channel, and watches the sun rise over Duxbury beach, bringing color to his jurisdiction.

Although the job of Duxbury Harbormaster sounds like a vacation for some, Don Beers and his staff have the responsibility of preserving and protecting the waterfront, while working hard to balance the needs of beachgoers, boaters, and fisherman.

The Harbormaster's year round office consists of three full time employees -- Beers, Peter Smey, assistant harbormaster and executive officer, and Ryan Chandler, assistant harbormaster and executive endangered species officer. In the summer the Harbormaster's staff includes 25



Harbormaster Don Beers wears many hats

...giving the man a \$50 fine, Beers walked out to him, explained what he was doing wrong, and had him remove his bucket from the digging area.



Beers talks with shellfisherman on Duxbury Beach

Harbormasters.

The Harbormaster wears many hats. Beers can be thought of as the policeman, the local game warden, as well as head of the Natural Resource Department for everything east of Washington Street.

It is the Harbormaster's duty to make sure that all the people who use the resources of the beach and water do so responsibly. This involves many patrols of the waters, boats, and fisherman who use the beach and the bay. Beers regularly conducts permit checks for shell fisherman digging in mud flats of Duxbury Bay.

On one patrol, Beers spotted a man who was using too large of a bucket. The shellfisher-

Beers said, "When most people break the rules they don't do so maliciously, they just don't know them. That is why education is the most important part of this job." Beers' belief in education over enforcement results in only about five tickets given per year. "We are ambassadors. We want to make sure that people feel welcome using their resources. We also want to teach them how to properly access these resources," he said.

The Harbormaster is also responsible for keeping the waters of Duxbury as clean as they can be. Twice a week, Beers meets with Frank Germano of the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries to test Duxbury Bay waters.

the bay on Wednesdays and Sundays so that water tests can be done when there is high boat use and low boat use. After the samples are taken, they are tested in Bourne for bacteria that could result in any number of sicknesses such as typhoid or polio.

Germano reports positive results for Duxbury waters. "Duxbury Bay has the cleanest water from Boston the Cape Cod Canal. That is a real testament to the job that the Harbormaster's Office does," Germano said.

Within the Harbormasters office are special Endangered Species Officers (ESO) who deal with preserving the bald eagles, least and common terns, seals, and piping plovers that live on or around Duxbury Beach. Thirty thousand dollars is spent each year preserving endangered wildlife, but most of the attention is given to the plovers since they are the most susceptible to harm.

This year, six piping plover pairs nested on Duxbury Beach. It is the ESO's job to ensure that there is no human harm done to the Plovers during their nesting or their chick's fledging.

Despite the efforts of the Harbormaster and the ESO's, the plover population is dwindling due to six foxes that live on the beach and kill the birds.

The duties of the

the water and beach of Duxbury; they reach into the classroom as well. The Harbormasters teach students in Duxbury, Marshfield, and Pembroke classrooms as well as working with the numerous field trips groups who visit the beach in June.

"The payback from teaching students is that they probably won't hurt the beach ... An educated visitor who learns to respect the beach is our friend while an uneducated visitor is our enemy," said Beers.